

## **IMPORTANT TIPS ABOUT CHARITABLE GIVING**

- **Be wary of telephone promoters asking for contributions. If you are solicited by phone, ask that the individual put their request in writing and provide complete information about the charitable program.**
- **Most police and fire departments are funded by tax dollars. However, their unions and social organizations may solicit you for contributions. These groups typically use paid fund-raisers to solicit donations. If you are solicited by an organization using the words “police” or “firefighter”, call your local police or fire department to verify that the group is actually supporting the department.**
- **Watch out for organizations that use questionable techniques such as sending unordered merchandise or invoices after you have turned them down for a donation. You are under no obligation to pay for or return items received under these circumstances.**
- **Be skeptical of organizations which list only post office boxes or mail drop "suites." Be particularly cautious of couriers willing to rush out to your home or office to pick up your donation.**
- **It is important to investigate charities before you contribute. Charities have to file tax returns on Form 990 which detail how they use their contributions. Organizations like Guidestar.org make those forms available online. Also, many charities are required to register with the Secretary of State's office, which information is also available online. You may check out charities through the Secretary of State's website at:  
[https://secure.sos.state.ga.us/SBR\\_Weblookup\\_Prod/Search.aspx](https://secure.sos.state.ga.us/SBR_Weblookup_Prod/Search.aspx)**
- **In fact, not all organizations with charitable sounding names are actually charities. Many “for profit” businesses are now using names that sound like charities.**
- **If a tax deduction is important to you, make sure the organization has a tax deductible status with the Internal Revenue Service. "Tax exempt" and "tax deductible" mean different things. "Tax exempt" means the organization does not have to pay taxes. "Tax deductible" means your contribution is tax deductible on your income tax return. Make sure you get a receipt which shows the amount of your contribution and states that the contribution is tax deductible.**
- **Many charitable solicitors ask for contributions of clothing, other household items and vehicles. The Internal Revenue Service has heightened its scrutiny of tax deductions based on those types of donations. Rules concerning**

**valuations and receipts have changed significantly; be sure you understand them completely.**